

CLAIMS:

1. A porous article which is formed from a polymeric material, in which characteristics of the surface of the article provided by the polymeric material are modified by having grafted to it chains of polymerised units of a first vinyl monomer, in which the mean number of the first vinyl monomer units in each chain is not more than 60.
2. An article as claimed in claim 1, in which the chains of the first vinyl monomer units include a unit of a second vinyl monomer.
3. A porous article which is formed from a polymeric material, in which characteristics of the surface of the article provided by the polymeric material are modified by having grafted to it chains of polymerised vinyl monomer units, in which the chains each comprise a number of units of a first vinyl monomer and include a unit of a second vinyl monomer which is different from the first vinyl monomer.
4. An article as claimed in claim 3, in which the ratio of the number of units of the first vinyl monomer in each chain to the number of units of the second vinyl monomer is not more than about 60.
5. An article as claimed in claim 3, in which the mean number of first vinyl monomer units in each chain is not more than 60.
6. An article as claimed in claim 2 or claim 3, in which the chains of the first vinyl monomer are capped by a unit of the second vinyl monomer.
7. An article as claimed in claim 1 or claim 5, in which the mean number of first vinyl monomer units in each chain is not more than 30.
8. An article as claimed in claim 1 or 3, in which the polymeric article comprises a non-woven fabric formed from fibres whose surface is provided by a polymeric material.

-23-

9. An article as claimed in claim 1 or 3, in which the polymeric article comprises a microporous sheet.

10. An article as claimed in claim 1 or 3, in which the first vinyl monomer comprises an ethyleneically unsaturated carboxylic acid or an ester thereof.

5 11. An article as claimed in claim 10, in which the first vinyl monomer comprises acrylic acid or an ester thereof.

12. An article as claimed in claim 2 or claim 3, in which the second vinyl monomer comprises vinyl acetic acid, vinyl sulphonic acid or vinyl phosphonic acid, or their salts or esters.

10 13. An article as claimed in claim 1 or 3, in which the polymer of the article comprises polypropylene.

14. An electrochemical device which comprises an anode, a cathode, a quantity of an electrolyte, and an electrode separator which is provided by an article as claimed in claim 1 or claim 3.

15 15. A method of making a porous polymeric article whose surface has grafted to it chains of polymerised vinyl monomer groups, which comprises:

a. impregnating a porous polymeric article with a solution of a first vinyl monomer and a second vinyl monomer,

20 b. exposing the impregnated article to ultraviolet radiation while exposure of the article to oxygen is restricted, to cause (i) the first vinyl monomer to form polymerised chains which are grafted to the surface of the polymeric article, and (ii) the second vinyl monomer to react with the polymerised chains of the first vinyl monomer.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the polymeric article comprises a non-woven fabric formed from fibres whose surface is provided by a polymeric material.

17. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the polymeric article comprises a microporous sheet.

5 18. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the first vinyl monomer comprises an ethyleneically unsaturated carboxylic acid or an ester thereof.

19. A method as claimed in claim 18, in which the first vinyl monomer comprises acrylic acid or an ester thereof.

10 20. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the second vinyl monomer comprises vinyl acetic acid, vinyl sulphonic acid or vinyl phosphonic acid, or their salts or esters.

21. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the ratio of the molar concentration of the first vinyl monomer in the solution to that of the second vinyl monomer is at least about 1.5.

15 22. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the polymer of the article comprises polypropylene.